1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[D.247-A]

have taken part or not. With Schebesta's archers it seems that the lineage elder is the final authority, below which rank the family heads.

Whereas the status of men is related to hunting ability and to proficiency in the arts of mime, dance, and song, the factors involved in determining the status of women are not clear. Fertility is probably one factor, and, almost certainly, ability as a singer another, for a good singer takes a leading part in the *elima* celebrations. The *elima* itself may be connected with adult male status, since one of its main features is the battle between the young men seeking to gain admission to the *elima* hut and the women guarding it. Married men may and do take part in this battle, but there comes a point when a man has neither the incentive nor, possibly, the necessary stamina. Anne Putnam writes of one elderly Mbuti, still active as a hunter, who was seen to cry during an *elima* festival. In response to a question he answered: "I fought my way into many an Alima hut when I was younger. Now I have no desires. It saddens me" (Putnam, 1954, 218). A young man who does not take part in the *elima* is a subject for ridicule.

2: Turnbull E-S (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

When Njobo was away from the band for a number of months with his son, these two nephews moved in. Normally they were not resident. Asuku brought not only his wife but also his father. He insisted on Njobo's wife looking after them, building their hut and so forth. Although Asuku was not liked, he would have been tolerated had he not tried to assume the status of Njobo, but this assumption moved him into an age group to which he did not belong, and he was consequently always being shouted down.

On one such occasion, Asuku was annoyed at the hunt for not leaving as soon as he would have liked. He strode up and down, telling everyone that they were lazy. When they shouted him down, he told them he was Njobo's son, so "I *am* Njobo, and this is Njobo's camp." When he was ignored he then turned from one great hunter to the other, and they all ignored him except one, who placed a stick on the ground at Asuku's feet and said, "There is a stick; if you are so big, pick it up and hit me." Asuku then turned to the elders, and Moké, the most influential of all, laughed in his face. At this, Asuku entered his hut and stayed inside for the whole day until dark.

On another occasion Asuku tried to say that his net was Njobo's net, and he was therefore entitled to Njobo's position in the hunt and should not be out on the fringes. He had chosen a time when his mother, Njobo's sister, was visiting, and the hunters did not want to make a dispute of the matter in front of her, out of respect for Njobo. However, one of them, Njobo's paternal cousin Manyalibo, went up to Asuku and said that if Asuku wanted that position it would mean setting his net next to him, and if that happened he would set up his net alone rather than stay in the hunt. This temporarily checked Asuku, and that evening old Moké gathered the senior hunters around him and, for once not smiling, he raised his arm and pointed across the camp to Asuku. This is considered a grave indictment, and the whole camp fell silent. Moké, very quietly, and talking as if only to the hunters but never lowering his arm or taking his eyes off Asuku, said, "That is a completely bad man. I have been watching and I have seen with my eyes, and my spirit [*roho*] makes me speak. He makes noise all the time, and he is the cause of all the noise in the camp. I would like to throw him out forever. But he is a relative of Njobo, and we should wait and see—and watch. That person is a child and has no right to share conversation with men. He is not of us. He comes from far off. I don't like people from far off. They are bad for any camp; they kill any camp completely." He then changed his attention and pointed at Ekianga, the other hunter of

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

renown, the man with a troublesome trio of wives, himself a frequent cause of friction in the camp. Shaking his finger at Ekianga, Moké said, "And that is a man, completely clean. He pleases my spirit [*roho*] very much."

After the evening meal Moké stood in the middle of the camp and pointed to the hearth of each great hunter and male elder in turn, naming them, and saying, "This is my man, this is my hearth, for it is his hearth; but it is not Asuku's." He even pointed over to Cephu's camp, and included Cephu. He then went back to his hut, leaving Asuku at the central fire with two elders.

Despite this display of disaffection, however, Asuku remained on. He had not only been pointed at, but named in public, and another had been named as good while he had been named as bad—a double disgrace. Ridicule, after this, was pointless, and although everyone wanted to be rid of Asuku, their respect for Njobo, coupled with Njobo's continued absence, prevented them from doing more than ignoring the offender as far as possible. After some three months, however, Asuku began to frequent the village for long periods. Although this meant he was at least not in the camp, which was thereby much improved, the hunters found this the ultimate insult and disloyalty. When he refused a summons to return to the hunting camp, old Moké once again stood in midcamp, an honored position from which any Mbuti, young or old, is free to claim the attention of everyone. He said that since now Asuku had become a villager, he was no longer an Mbuti, no longer "ours"; he belonged far away, very far away indeed. Pointing to the central fire in the section of the camp that included Njobo's wife and three great hunters, and divers others both related and unrelated, he said, "This is a matter of the forest. This is our hearth. It is Njobo's hearth. It is not Asuku's hearth. He belongs in the village or completely and absolutely far away."

There were murmurs of assent from everyone, and Moké looked around to each individual hearth, asking, "Is my spirit [*roho*] right?" Agreement was unanimous, though subdued, and Moké simply said, "*Asi-to*"—"It is finished." The next day word was sent by a youth to Asuku's father, in the territory of Effundi Somali, a few miles on the far side of the Epulu. I was told that the youth simply gave a verbatim account of what had happened. Asuku never returned to the Epulu band, and left the village, returning to his father's territory.

His cousin, Mbaaka, was not such a stranger in the band, but soon after his marriage, and some six months after the Asuku episode, he

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

began more and more frequently to talk from midcamp. Like Asuku, he complained about laziness and bad hunting, common enough complaints but seldom aired from midcamp. When he began to claim special attention by virtue of being Njobo's "son," however, he was promptly ridiculed. People stopped listening to him, even from midcamp, and dared him to name them—a procedure that commands attention. Even unmarried youths called out, "Your noise will kill us all," and children began to imitate his whining voice. Masisi, a cousin of Njobo and, with Manyalibo, about to move from the status of hunter to that of elder, took Mbaaka aside at one point and talked to him quietly, recalling what had happened to Asuku.

Seeing that Mbaaka at last had begun to listen to reason, his brother, who up till then had never interfered, made a loud and rude joke that brought the whole camp down with laughter, then said, "Everyone is crazy—I'm going to sleep," and promptly went to sleep. Masisi then returned to midcamp with Mbaaka and said that if anyone else tried to be funny he would turn himself into a villager and bewitch everyone. A youth took up the thread and said that the village was responsible for all the noise anyway, because his girl friend never listened to him any more and was a bad cook (a typical pygmaean non sequitur). This rather forced good humor persisted throughout the next day, with the women telling jokes and laughing loudly the moment the conversation drifted in the direction of Mbaaka's former complaints. There were a few more remarks to the effect that the village was indeed responsible for all the noise, and the rest of Mbaaka's stay (two further months) was unmarred by any repeated claims to privilege through kinship to Njobo.

It is plain, then, that while any movement toward individual authority, conscious or otherwise, is sharply countered, and while individual authority is virtually nil, there is nonetheless a clear basic framework to support the values of the hunting band. There is the division of leadership, according to field, throughout the entire band, yet there is the midcamp site from which anyone may harangue all present. Although he has no means of compelling attention, it is generally accorded, and may be further compelled by pointing to or naming the individuals concerned. Further it is plain that the elders, including those hunters whose position is being gradually taken over by their children, act as final arbitrators, always careful to stress that what they say is a matter of their opinion, or of their heart. Only when unanimity is beyond question is an opinion or an action con-

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

he caught the first of the animals fleeing from the beaters, but he had not been able to retreat before he was discovered.

I had never heard of this happening before, and it was obviously a serious offense. In a small and tightly knit hunting band, survival can be achieved only by the closest co-operation and by an elaborate system of reciprocal obligations which insures that everyone has some share in the day's catch. Some days one gets more than others, but nobody ever goes without. There is, as often as not, a great deal of squabbling over the division of the game, but that is expected, and nobody tries to take what is not his due.

Cephu tried very weakly to say that he had lost touch with the others and was still waiting when he heard the beating begin. It was only then that he had set up his net, where he was. Knowing that nobody believed him, he added that in any case he felt he deserved a better place in the line of nets. After all, was he not an important man, a chief, in fact, of his own band? Manyalibo tugged at Ekianga to sit down, and sitting down himself he said there was obviously no use prolonging the discussion. Cephu was a big chief, and a chief was a villager, for the BaMbuti never have chiefs. And Cephu had his own band, of which he was chief, so let him go with it and hunt elsewhere and be a chief elsewhere. Manyalibo ended a very eloquent speech with *"Pisa me taba"* ("Pass me the tobacco").

Cephu knew he was defeated and humiliated. Alone, his band of four or five families was too small to make an efficient hunting unit. He apologized profusely, reiterated that he really did not know he had set up his net in front of the others, and said that in any case he would hand over all the meat. This settled the matter, and accompanied by most of the group he returned to his little camp and brusquely ordered his wife to hand over the spoils. She had little chance to refuse, as hands were already reaching into her basket and under the leaves of the roof where she had hidden some liver in anticipation of just such a contingency. Even her cooking pot was

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

emptied. Then each of the other huts was searched and all the meat taken. Cephu's family protested loudly and Cephu tried hard to cry, but this time it was forced and everyone laughed at him. He clutched his stomach and said he would die; die because he was hungry and his brothers had taken away all his food; die because he was not respected.

The kumamolimo was festive once again, and the camp seemed restored to good spirits. An hour later, when it was dark and fires were flickering outside every hut, there was a great blaze at the central hearth and the men talked about the morrow's hunt. From Cephu's camp came the sound of the old man, still trying hard to cry, moaning about his unfortunate situation, making noises that were meant to indicate hunger. From our own camp came the jeers of women, ridiculing him and imitating his moans.

When Masisi had finished his meal he took a pot full of meat with mushroom sauce, cooked by his wife, and quietly slipped away into the shadows in the direction of his unhappy kinsman. The moaning stopped, and when the evening molimo singing was at its height I saw Cephu in our midst. Like most of us he was sitting on the ground, in the manner of an animal. But he was singing, and that meant that he was just as much a BaMbuti as anyone else.